(b) whether the scheme of ESSAR fits within the guidelines on the subject;

(c) whether the proposed investment will be made in Indian Rupees, using the Rupee Auction Scheme of Russia;

(d) whether Government will approve repatriation of interest|divident and possible disinvestment in future, in dollar terms;

(e) whether it is a fact that Essar Group is investing US dollar 80 million in an Italian venture and the proposal is under Government's positive consideration; and

(f) if so, what is the justification to approve such investment proposals, whereby the Essar Group takes Rupee funds from Russia and invests its own funds in Italy, causing a net loss to Government in terms of precious foreign exchange outgo?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SH. M. V. CHANDRASHEKARA MURTHY): (a) There is no formal intergovernmental agreement. However discussions have taken place on the possible use by the Russian side of a portion of these funds for investments in India in approved sectors. Modalities for effecting such investments and detailed guidelines governing the same have not yet been worked at.

(b) Does not apply as guidelines have yet to be determined.

(c) and (d) A final view in the matter has not yet been taken by the Government.

(e) A proposal for an investment of US dollar 76.8 million in a steel venture in Italy has been received by the Government from M|s. ESSAR Gujarat Ltd.

(f) All relevant factor including foreign exchange implications, will be taken into account before final decisions are taken.

Computerisation in SBI

6957. SHRI SANJAY DALMIA: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are considering to computerise all the branches of State Bank of India; and

(b) if so, the details thereof and the final decision likely to be taken|proposed to be implemented?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI M. V. CHANDRASHEKARA MURTHY): (a) and (b) State Bank of India has reported that there is no proposal to computerise all its branches. However, the Bank plans to computerise 1000 branches by the end of March, 1998.

Nadia Gramin Bank (W.B.)

6958. SHRI E. BALANANDAN: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the issue of demotion of personnel from the post of Field Supervisor to Clerical cadre of Nadia Gramin Bank (W.B.) has been referred by NABARD to Government of India long back for their consideration; and

(b) what is the decision of Government communicated to NABARD in the matter?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI M. V. CHANDRASHEKARA MURTHY): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The matter is referred to Central Government Industrial Tribunal at Calcutta for adjudication.

Excise Duty on Shoe Manufacturers

6959. SHRI KRISHAN LAL SHARMA: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the prices of shoes manufactured by authorised firms are very high and beyond the reach of a common man:

(b) whether it is also a fact that many manufacturers feel that excise duty on many components used in the shoe making is responsible for their high prices;

(c) if so, whether Government proposes to reduce them in the interest of common man?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI M. V. CHANDRASHEKARA MURTHY) : (a) to (c) Cheaper footwear whose value does not exceed Rs. 50|- per pair, and hawai chappals, other than those made of leather, are already exempt from excise duty and so are the parts used therein. Other footwear and parts thereof are charged to excise duty at the rate of 15 per cent advalorem. As for the saleprice of shoes, it may be mentioned that market prices are determined by various factors and not by the incidence of excise duty alone.

Representations have been received for reduction of excise duty on parts of dutiable footwear. However, as the facility of Modvat credit is available in respect of duty paid on such parts, the request has not been found to be acceptable.

Development of Expressways and Telecommunications

6960. SHRI KRISHAN LAL SHARMA: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the country needs more than Rs. 1,50,000 crores and Rs. 50,000 crores of investment for the development of expressways and telecommunications respectively in the coming 5-10 years;

(b) whether it is also a fact that due to resource crunch it has not been possible to take up these infrastuctural deficiencies;

(c) whether Government propose to invite or have already invited the private sector in this matter; and

(d) if so, their response?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI M. V. CHANDRASHEKARA MURTHY): (a) As per the Government of India's Eighth Five-Year Plan, the estimated public sector outlay for roads and bridges, telecommunications & electronic industries and telecommunication services for the five years from 1992 upto 1997 are indicated below:

(Rs. Crores)

	at 1991-92 prices
1. Roads & Bridges	12833
2. Telecommunication & Electronic Industries	1072
3. Telecommunication Seraices	23946

(b) to (d) Considering the fact that the Government's ability to undertake investment in infrastrucure is severely constrained, Government has introduced several structural reforms and announced a package of incentive to attract private sector participation in the provision of infrastructural services. To promote private sector participation in the development and maintenance of roads; road sector has been declared as an industry, relevant provisions of MRTP Act has been relaxed to enable large firms to enter this sector and National Highway Act is amended to allow private sector in construction, maintenance and operation of roads on build, operate and transfer (BOT) basis. During 1994-95 the Government has invited proposals from the private sector including foreign companies for 17 projects with a total investment of about Rs. 850 crores. In telecommunication sector Government has opened by value added services in 1992 to private sector which include Cellular Mobile Phones, Radio, Paging, Electronic Mail voice Mail, Audiotex Services, Videote Services, but Services using VSAT and Video Conferencing. National Telecom Policy, 1994 allowed private secto